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The Musket

LEXINGTON HIGH SCHOOL'S STUDENT-RUN NEWSPAPER SINCE 1969

Little Lex
Little Lex debate tournament was held at Lexington High School on Nov. 19.
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Fall Classic
LHS seniors participate in tournament against Newton South High School.
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Volume LVIV Issue III—December 2016

Sources of Strength aims to ameliorate stress at Lexington High

Staff photo by Alice Li

SOS encourages students to have positive relationships and estabslished support systems to prevent suicide.

Maria Santillana Linares
Karannath Ragunath
Staff Writers

Sources of Strength has brought two new projects to Lexington High School that revolve around positivity, The Wedge Project and Storycorps.

Promoted by the SOS Facebook page, the Wedge Project focuses on each of the wedges of the Sources of Strength Wheel: positive friends, mentors, mental health, generosity, family support, healthy activities, medical access and spirituality. Each month during all lunches, students will be able to annonymously write down their source of strength pertaining to that month's section.

Storycorps takes a more personal approach. The project allows students to share unique stories by recording them in the Rock Room. They will be put up on the SOS Facebook and Instagram accounts. SOS has devised ways for students to share their stories annyonymously, if they choose to. The hope is that by sharing moments where they got through a hard time with a friend, others will be encouraged to seek out help when they need it.

SOS was brought to LHS by the Lexington Youth and Family Services in 2015. It is headed by LYSF adult staff and over 60 Lexington peer leaders. The initiative gained traction when students were photographed holding up motivational posters during lunches that answered the question, "What is your source of strength?"

The main goal of SOS is to "prevent suicide by increasing help seeking behaviors and promoting connections between peers and caring adults," Erin Deery, an LYFS adult leader, said.

After nationwide and local teen suicides, "LYFS was concerned about high stress environment in Lexington and the impact on teen mental health and wellness," she said.

Lexington students echoed this sentiment. Juniors Noam Watt and Shira Garbis agreed that the stress and pressure continue to be constant issues in the school.

"At LHS, as we all know, there's a lot of drive to do well. But more often than not that drive turns into competition. I think that SOS helps to drown out that message and instead spreads one of positivity and strength," Garbis said.

Currently, the organization's main focus is awareness.

"Communication is one of the biggest parts of getting through challenges," Watt said.

SOS hopes that awareness about the organization will lead to a greater sense of community. By having available resources, students can fight the stigma around mental health and build a network that they can rely on when things get hard.

As much as the students involved deal with heavy topics, they focus on the positivity aspect of their work.

"Knowing that what SOS does can both directly help people, and create a better environment at LHS in the long run, is something I take a lot of pride in," Garbis said.

Christen Walters brings Shakespeare to life in the classroom

Allie Antonevich
Amina Khan
Staff Writers

Christen Walters, a freshman English teacher, entered her fifth year at Lexington High School with a unique perspective on teaching Shakespeare.

In 2015, she spent three weeks in London, attending the Globe Theatre's "Shakespeare Through the Ages" course, which selects only 25 teachers from around the United States every year to attend.

"[The program's purpose was] to study and learn from actors, directors, globe practitioners, and Shakespeare scholars," Walters said.

Walters earned the opportunity by applying for a fellowship through the Lexington Education Foundation.

"Being surrounded by 25 other teachers who are as passionate about Shakespeare as you are was inspiring," Walters said.

Though Walters studied Shakespeare, she now applies some of the techniques beyond the Shakespeare units. Walters focuses on making the text physical so that students can connect with the character.

"[At the Globe,] they give you the freedom to explore lots of different interpretations. [This] gives students a chance to try out different things with the text so they can find something that strikes a chord with them and feels authentic to them," Walters said.

Marc Cantor, who teaches Romeo and Juliet in the resources classroom, saw the impact of Walters' learning on her teaching.

"One exercise that I think was really a change for students was when we read Haroun and The Sea of Stories," Cantor said. "We sat on the floor, and the scene takes place in a dark ship where it's stormy, so she assigned roles for movements and certain phrases. For example, when a line talked about waves, she had the students sway side to side," he said.

Staff photo by Stephanie Park

Christen Walters facilitates deeper learning of Shakespeare.

Cantor explained that this created a scene in which the student could really experience what the author was trying to promote. These techniques can make a big difference for students who have a hard time understanding the texts just by reading it. Cantor said that he will be implementing Walter's teachings into his own teaching.

Editorial

LHS administrators should be more transparent about issues that concern students

For the first few months of the school year, the mystery of school Wi-Fi was the subject of much student ire, topped only by the 2016 election results. Yet for an issue that attracted so much controversy, Lexington High School students knew remarkably little about what was going on.

"I still didn't know exactly what happened. I feel like the decision to cut off Wi-Fi was made without public knowledge," Anika Mehra, Student-Faculty Senate representative to the Lexington Public Schools Tech Task Force, said.

Amid the confusion, students conjured up their own rumors for the disappearance of Wi-Fi. Some students hypothesized that the school was taking personal devices off the Wi-Fi network because of an overload of web demands during I block. Others claimed that the school did not want personal devices distracting students during study halls and frees.

However, by Nov. 15, all was back to normal. While students rejoiced at connecting back onto the school network, there was still no official word from the school administration.

Nonetheless, unlike most of the student body, LHS faculty were aware of the problem. In a detailed email sent to LHS faculty, Marianne McKenna, director of computing, information and technical services for LPS, explained that the school web content filter was broken and that "large numbers of unnamed or identified non school devices on the network" were blocked to lessen the number of devices flooding the network.

The fact that faculty were briefed on the issue while students were left uninformed points to a chronic lack of transparency within the school. Although the Wi-Fi situation has caused one of the largest incidents of confusion at LHS in recent years, uncertainty at LHS is not at all uncommon. Just last year, with the proposed introduction of I block, most students could only speculate as to how the new block would function.

While both I block and the Wi-Fi conundrum impact the entire school, the school administration made it a priority to tell students how I block works. The new block schedule was thoroughly explained at the beginning of the school year, and an orderly transition to I block ensued.

It is time for the school administration to adopt the same approach to other issues that concern everyone at LHS. At the very least, more transparency will help curb any rumours swirling in the hallways and prevent unnecessary anger from being channeled towards school administration. If the school sees the need to tell all faculty about any pervasive problem, then students should also be sent an email regarding the issue. After all, students deserve to know too.

Unsigned editorials reflect the opinion of the majority of the editorial board.

METCO program should be continued

■ Talia Blatt
Emily Chen
Staff Writers

METCO, a desegregation program that allows students from racially imbalanced schools in Boston and suburban students to learn together, has played an important role in increasing the diversity of the Lexington student body as well as providing students from the METCO program with a quality education.

Despite the benefits of the program, Mark Andersen, a Lexington resident, has recently submitted essays to the Lexington School Committee against METCO due to its cost and legality.

Andersen's essays argue that the program contributes to the current issues of draining resources and overcrowding, emphasizing that the program took $5.6 million per year from Lexington taxpayers while BPS contributed nothing.

Furthermore, Andersen questions the legal standing of METCO by stating that it violates the Massachusetts Racial Imbalance Act. Andersen wrote that, since the purpose of METCO was to created an "integrated" learning environment by bringing students from "racially imbalanced schools" to "isolated suburban schools", the program is no longer needed in Lexington. Since the percentage of white students at Lexington Public Schools continues to decrease towards 50%, he argues that Lexington will soon qualify as racially balanced.

Despite these arguments against the program, no action or formal proposals have been made by the School Committee to withdraw from the program.

After all, METCO is critical in providing students with educations that would otherwise be inaccessible to them.

"From time to time, I do compare the experiences that I have had in Boston and in Lexington ... BPS lacks funding in comparison to LPS," Marertu Girma, a senior who entered Hastings Elementary School in the first grade, said.

"Having a challenging curriculum and ample resources, such as textbooks, are really important. If I was in BPS, I would not have those privileges," she added.

Further, Lexington residents benefit just as much from METCO as its members. While Lexington is arguably more diverse than in previous years, the school system still demographically excludes increasingly marginalized people, namely African-Americans and Hispanics, representing 3.7 and 3.6 percent of the school population, respectively.

By increasing diversity in the school system, Lexington students benefit tangibly from METCO. Students see social issues from a different perspective and are exposed more to diversity, and black or Hispanic students in Lexington can make friends with people of their own race.

"When it's race or religion or other things, there are hard conversations that we need to navigate, and I think what the METCO program does is, it forces us to have those conversations and check our own personal biases on a daily basis. That's the a huge part of education," Principal Lasa said.

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Staff photo by Catherine Cheng

LHS provides Boston students an opportunity to study in Lexington.

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2016–2017

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LHS responds to 2016 election result

POSITIVE

■ Talia Blatt
Staff Writer

It's easy to get bogged down in pessimistic global trends when discussing the election. However, this focus on large scale possibilities obscures the effects of the election on the Lexington High School community. Despite the polarization, hatred and fear rising in America, LHS has maintained a respectful and safe atmosphere, reflected in both teachers and students.

After the election results came in, teachers successfully balanced offering consolation and support, while accepting different viewpoints which made the school a safe space for all.

"Teachers responded to and encouraged us to debrief in class … We had a choral concert that night, and Mr. Iannuzzi gave all of the chorus-es a pep talk," senior Rowan Wheeler said.

Educators all over the school led class discussions to ease tensions and let students express their thoughts and feelings. While some students were frustrated by what they saw as bias, LHS teachers overall were open to a broad range of opinions.

"I cannot recall any teachers seeming unwelcoming or biased in any way," sophomore Alexander Tung said.

Especially crucial to maintaining LHS' positive environment was keeping respectful attitudes amongst students.

"My opinion has been pretty well respected when I've decided to voice it," Jamie Murray, a sophomore and self-identified Republican in a dominantly liberal environment, said. "People's choice of president this year doesn't make them a good or bad person," he added. "I felt a really strong sense of community on the 9th," Rowan Wheeler said.

Some students were unhappy with the reactions to the election, and reflected those feelings on social media.

"Facebook and twitter have been terrible at creating any community I'd want to be part of during this election," senior Rory Schadler said.

Yet social media is notorious for perpetuating the most extreme positions and takes input from widespread sources, which can't be blamed on LHS students. Other students were frustrated with the lack of administrative support, especially the Social Justice Club. But Principal Lasa intends fo send an all-school message, which should assuage concerns.

Despite high tensions surrounding the election, LHS students and teachers have preserved a space of positivity and openness.

NEGATIVE

■ Emily Chen
Staff Writer

The LHS administrative coped poorly with the 2016 election results. Although there have been attempts at positivity and encouragement, the lack of immediate administrative support resulted in a rocky post-election school climate.

"I was extremely emotional about the election, and I know many people around me were as well. On election morning, I felt both a sense of support from my friends and fellow Hillary supporters, but also a feeling of loss — almost like a death of a loved one," Arielle Rosker, a senior, wrote over email.

While some individuals provided comfort, administrative support was crucial right after the election in order to make students feel safe and accepted. LHS failed to provide in that aspect.

"My practice is always if I wish to send out something immediately, people often perceive that there is something more wrong than there actually is … If I send something out, people get in more of a panic than they think there might be," Principal Laura Lasa said.

However, this practice failed to create normalcy because, for many students, Trump's election was not only a dynamic shift in their political climates, but in their feelings of security pertaining to their identity.

"Only a few of my teachers addressed the election, and it felt as if I needed a place to go, someone who could relate, to talk about my feelings to," Rosker wrote. "... It felt as if the school should stand in solidarity, and that there should have been a statement that everyone is accepted at LHS."

On Dec. 5, Lasa released a message to students expressing her post-election concern. The message emphasized the importance of continuing to engage in discussion about our country's values, examining other perspectives and reminding students that LHS is a safe space for all.

While the message is a step towards support, the administration should have acted sooner. Boston Public Schools included a new section under their Social Emotional Learning and Wellness section called the Post-Election Resources, which was released on Nov. 9, said Senior Adviser Lydia Ramos to the BPS Superintendent Tommy Chang.

"We realized the need for such resources early on Nov. 9," Ramos wrote over email. "We thought it was important to let those who were experiencing various emotions to know that we are community and we will be here to help each other."

Although Boston's demographics may have prompted a tailored response, Lexington still should have taken a faster stance on this matter.

Nevertheless, I would like to recognize that the administration was doing their best effort to be productive. Acton-Boxborough Regional High School student Ellen Liu and Westford Academy student Carina Hou, neither schools' administrative bodies addressed the results.

LHS Associate Principal John Murray talked about a grief and loss protocol that was followed to address particular groups of students who felt especially vulnerable post-election. While I respect the effort to put the students' needs in the hands of the faculty, a mere statement similar to that of BPS would have helped many students get through their day and feel safer at LHS.

Aside from administrative action, the student body should work more politically to address and advocate for problems many have with the president-elect's beliefs, given the tangible consequences of this election.

With a student body as liberal as ours, students should use the election results as motivation to have political and social conversations about racism, homophobia, sexism and the other oppressive structures that exist both within and outside of our liberal bubble.

"Time is going to make everything better. But for now, the problem is still here," Vanessa Zhang, a senior, said.

Teachers should make more effort to return work promptly

■ Ishika Jha
Clare Wiesen
Staff Writers

PRO:

Despite the diversity in the Lexington High School student body, almost everyone can relate to the moment of passing in a test and already being consumed with the thoughts of grades. Sometimes it takes weeks to get back a test, and thoughts of the impending grades are replaced with the thoughts of upcoming assignments. But when that test is delivered back with a less than desirable grade on it, it's hard not to think of the hours spent preparing and wondering what went wrong. How long did I study? Did I do enough practice problems? Was there anything I could have done differently? It's hard to remember because of all the time passed since then.

When teachers don't return work in a timely fashion, "it makes it more difficult for me to make progress in the course since I don't know how I'm doing," senior Maya Joshi-Delity said. "I think it also creates some worry because you're distracted from what you're currently doing because you're so worried about 'oh did I get this grade' or 'did I understand this properly.'"

It is also important for teachers give feedback in quizzes before the material is tested again. If a student does not understand it at the time of the quiz, they need to know so they can work on the material before a larger test.

"I feel confident that if I get [assignments] back to [students] before I'm going to ask them to do that skill again, or do to that type of writing, or to express understanding of that content then they have the feedback they need," Katherine Manning, a history teacher at LHS, said.

The most important assignments to get back are the ones where that feedback is integral to future learning, but sometimes the delay can get to a point where it creates questions about quarter grades. Tests and essays typically take the longest to grade, but have the most effect on overall grades. When they aren't returned students stress about the uncertainty of their grades.

Teachers should make more of an effort to return work back more promptly. Receiving feedback allows for more student progression, provides an opportunity to improve on class material and reduces unnecessary stress that stems from the worry about grades.

CON:

For every assignment, test or quiz given to a student, there are at least eighty more given to the teacher, expected to be graded and returned in under a week.

State requirements, standardized testing and the challenging curriculum of LHS all call for the need of multiple assignments to make sure that students retain all of the necessary information needed for them to succeed.

Not only are teachers expected to return lots of work quickly, but they are also expected to go through them carefully, offer specific and helpful advice and make no errors all whilst being asked over and over again, "When are we getting our tests back?"

With essays, exams and unit tests in particular, where work can consist heavily of long answer responses and answers that are not concrete, the pressure to give back work increases.

"I used to try to get [long essays and tests] back in about a week, but what I have discovered is that it's quite impossible with. 125 students," Manning said.

When returning those types of assignments, teachers must go through over a hundred versions of the same type and still make sure to keep up with the new unit that comes along, which adds to their workload and creates more stress.

Another thing that takes teachers more time to do is giving feedback. Since feedback is so integral to learning and succeeding when it comes to testing and gaining a strong understanding of the material, teachers should be given more time so that they can make sure their feedback is as helpful as possible.

"[The feedback] is worth the wait if it helps us to improve on what we need to learn how to do to succeed in the class," freshman Meghan Nyhof said.

Teachers should be allowed to take more time to turn work around. Giving them that leniency lowers the levels of stress and pressure and allows them to be able to more effectively help their students learn.

METCO
[from page 2]

The matters of diversity and racial inclusivity outweigh all other problems with the METCO program. Despite overcrowding, we can always make room for our African-American and Hispanic students. To say that our Asian population provides this level of diversity is inaccurate. The large presence of one minority group should not allow the disregard of others.

Staff photo by Catherine Cheng

Town center sidewalks may be renovated

Alexa Christ
Jennifer Lo
Staff Writers

PRO:

Over the past few weeks, Lexington residents were faced with the decision of either saving the brick sidewalks in the Lexington Center or getting rid of them to improve safety. The main concern among town residents is that taking away the bricks would also be taking away the historical feel.

However, the Center is more than the bricks it's built with. The bricks don't single-handedly create the historic feel, the Center contains other popular sites that contribute to its atmosphere like the Town Green, the Captain Parker Arms Statue and Buckman Tavern.

"Getting rid of the bricks isn't erasing history--history didn't happen on those sidewalks," Genna Kim, a sophomore, said.

In addition, brick sidewalks prevent people from enjoying the center safely or comfortably.

"Concrete would be a smoother surface and more appropriate with people with wheelchairs and walkers and canes and baby carriages," Michelle Ciccolo, a member of the Board of Selectmen, said.

The US Department of Transportation even advises against the use of brick in sidewalk, stating that unlevel bricks "create a vibrating bumpy ride that can be uncomfortable and painful for those in wheelchairs."

Overall, the purpose of a sidewalk is to allow people of ranging abilities to walk safely, yet in the Center, this isn't the case.

"The town should be accessible to everyone and if that means getting rid of the bricks, then get rid of the bricks," Alice Davidson, a sophomore, said. If the bricks impede disabled people's comfort and safety, then they should be replaced.

The Town Center is where residents and tourists alike can experience history firsthand by just taking a stroll down the street. Replacing the brick ensures that the town center can truly be available for all people to enjoy.

CON:

The Lexington Town Center is well known to all the citizens of Lexington. Currently there has been a lot of controversy surrounding the renovation of the sidewalks in the Center.

While the Lexington Selectmen have not finalized the renovation to Lexington Center's sidewalks, many citizens appear to be against changes discussed so far.

For instance, a Facebook page has been created called "Preserve Lexington's Brick Sidewalks," where citizens of Lexington have stated their concerns about the changes. In addition, while walking or driving through town, one may observe a multitude of signs reading "Save Lexington Center," indicating a lack of support for the sidewalk changes.

Lexington itself is a historical landmark, and some believe that the brick construction is part of what makes the town unique.

"The brick walk ways are such an iconic component of our town. They add a homey feel and they are also much more appealing than dull gray concrete," Vivian Li, a junior, said.

Another reason why plans to renovate the sidewalks have failed to gain full support is the considerable price of the project. The estimated construction cost would be around $8 million, Peter Kelley, a selectman, said. Rather than spending the large sum on disposing of the charming brick sidewalks, Lexington could repair the brick instead.

Ultimately, Lexington is known for its historic role in America, the town should try to keep as much of its historical atmosphere as possible. After all, tourists come here to enjoy every aspect of our town and changing the foundation would change the unique culture that people

Staff photo by Arjun Delity

The sidewalks outside shops at Lexington Center are paved with bricks.

College Bored: Resist senior slump

collegebored

Yuhang Zhang
Columnist

There is just something about this time of year. The air is cold, as are feelings towards school. Sandwiched between the food coma that is Thanksgiving and the joys of winter break, this blob of time is when you find motivation steadily slipping away. December is filled with tests, group projects, and the disappointment of almost-snow days. Oh yeah, and in case you some how forgot, early decisions.

In the midst of this academic purgatory, it's so easy to just let schoolwork slip away. After all, you're a senior — what difference could failing a test make? It feels as though by the end of December, the senior class will be split in two: those who are happily in a college of their choice, and those who must grit through until April.

Now, if you know me at all, I am absolutely terrible at giving encouragement, and so I won't. Then again, if you wanted happiness, the Musket has a theoretically 'fun' page that you can check out.

What I will do, though, is exercise my full talents in cynicism. Hopefully, by the end of this, you will be so discouraged from slacking that you'll put down the Musket and get to work.

Ready?

First of all, you might not get into your early school. Out of all six of my readers (kidding, don't fire me), it's a statistical certainty that some won't get into an early school. That means that on that bitter December day, you'll have the added tragedy of realizing you still need that A in gym class. Trust me, being rejected hurts more if it's because of badminton.

Second, for the lucky, early-accepted: not everything is safe yet. Maybe you've heard of it, undoubtedly whispered in a frightened tone.

Rescinded (adj.): decision withdrawn, dreams crushed. synonyms: devastated, pulverized.

You don't want to be rescinded. With rejection, it comes immediately and painfully, and you get over it with just a few bruises. Being rescinded is more like riding a hot air balloon into the sky, then having it break. I'm not smart enough to know the exact value, but your final velocity upon hitting the ground will hurt much, much more.

In case those two nightmare scenarios don't scare you from a slump into sitting on the edge of your seat, transformed into a nail-biting, nerve-wracked studying machine, maybe the next one will.

Disclaimer: I promise this next paragraph is from my own free will, with absolutely nothing to do with the fact my teachers read this, and that I desperately need my participation grade to go up. Also, in case you haven't figured out by now, my promises are as empty as my appetite for studying.

The truth, though, is that learning is actually useful. Lexington High School, despite the number of rants I've had about it, is still one of the best public high schools in the nation, and we are all so lucky to have excellent curricula and teachers. Not caring is throwing away a quality education that many people can only dream of, as well as shredding many of your opportunities for the future.

Whether you go to college or pursue a career directly, learning is an integral part of life and shouldn't be viewed as a chore, but rather as a privilege.

And now that's done, and I can continue snarking my way through the rest of this column. Hopefully some of this has convinced you to wake up from your annual hibernation, chug a few espressos, and absolutely devour a few textbooks worth of material.

As for me? I will be doing the same, as well as finding another talent beside cynicism I can use for the next issue.

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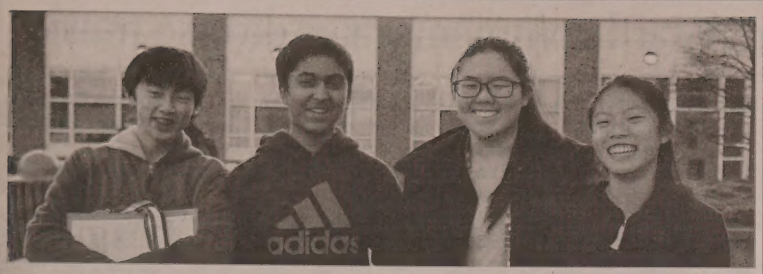


Staff photo by Kelly Hui

Top scoring freshman Policy debaters (left to right): David Cai, Ashlan Ahmed, Kurissa Choi and Caroline Li.

Little Lex debate tournament held at LHS

Olivia Kormos
Lily Lawrence
Staff Writers

The Lexington High School debate team ran Little Lex, the first tournament that they hosted this year, on Nov. 19.

The tournament included competitors from 25 schools. Students competed in Lincoln-Douglas, Public Forum and Policy debate, in varsity and novice divisions. There were 75 Lexington debate students participating in the event.

"You're dealing with 350 kids and about 100 judges or so, and six different events spread out over four buildings, the logistics are complicated … everybody's got to work together," Sheryl Kaczmarek LHS debate teacher, said.

While Kaczmarek organized the event: directing students and hiring adult judges, a group of five debate students also took charge.

"Their jobs included tabulating scores, letting people know where they needed to be, organizing the pairings for rounds and organizing housing for some debaters traveling to the tournament," Anika Mehra, a junior running Little Lex, said.

Students competed in tournaments and "debated topics that they had already prepared arguments for in their debate programs," Mehra said. For example, in a Public Forum event, varsity teams from Shrewsbury and Newton South debated the pros and cons of the "Internet of Things."

The Public Forum teams of two did not know if they would be arguing for or against the resolution until a coin was flipped. The teams gave opening arguments and cross-examinations, culminating in a "grand cross" and final argument.

"I think it's really cool to talk to the novices after the round and tell them what they could've done better … you're helping facilitate the growth of these people who just entered the community, and you take on a kind of leadership role and it feels really nice," Manu Gunnala, a junior who acted as a judge, said.

"Not all students were pleased with their debate experience," Christine Wang, a freshman, said. "A lot of parent judges did not know what they are doing, and because of that, the rounds were judged unfairly," Wang said.

Speaking on the overall success of the event, Kaczmarek "was really impressed … there was a lot of adversity and everybody stayed calm and got done what needed doing."

Lexington debaters won second through sixth place in novice policy, first and second in varsity policy and second and third in varsity Lincoln-Douglas. Other high-achieving schools at the tournament included Newton-South, Needham, Acton-Boxborough, and Mamaroneck (NY.)

Content filter causes LHS to temporarily lose Wi-Fi

Anelga Hajjar
Avani Kabra
Staff Writers

This past month, some students opened their phones to check Instagram or Snapchat, only to find out that they had been locked out of the school Wi-Fi.

Students and faculty observed the disconnection only for student-owned devices, such as phones and laptops.

Many students felt they would be unable to complete work due to the inability to access online textbooks and Google Docs.

In response, Nick Rommel, a sophomore, started a petition on Change.org to get the Wi-Fi restored.

"I have a very limited data plan and unless I use my data, I could not really use the internet at school," Rommel said.

The petition was supported by 122 signatures.

However, not all student devices were affected. Alissa Wang. a sophomore, said "I didn't experience any change in my ability to access the Wi-Fi. It continued to work as it always has."

Currently, the Internet has returned, though most students are unsure about why it was first removed and whether it will be again.

LHS Principal Laura Lasa provided an explanation on what occurred with the Wi-Fi restriction and how it was restored.

"What is important for people to know is that the school's use of the Wi-Fi system is linked to the entire town," Lasa said. The collectively shared Wi-Fi system means that "when Wi-Fi slows down, the IT department is obligated to find a way to speed that system up in order to provide access for essential administrative staff and faculty," Lasa said.

Before the Wi-Fi restriction, the Wi-Fi had slowed down and the IT department was waiting on the delivery of a content filter that would speed up availability. Lasa said, "in preparation for that changeover, [IT] needed to block access to the Wi-Fi from what they term, 'unrecognized devices." These "unrecognized devices" were mostly student devices.

Lasa said there was no intentional targeting. Once the content filter was installed, the devices connected to the internet.

"There needs to be ... a larger conversation around some decisions we need to make as a district on how we really provide Wi-Fi access to the school ... [and] a discussion on how we filter devices," Lasa said.

Fall Classic takes place in Newton between Newton South and Lexington

Lara Bursal
Anthony Sjodin
Staff Writers

On Dec. 4, the Lexington High School and Newton South High School class offices hosted the first Fall Classic.

The event was a tournament between the two schools, with the purpose of fostering school spirit through friendly competition and raising money for the senior classes and charity. The event took place at NSHS.

Jongtae Jeon and Bhavik Nagda, Lexington and Newton South's respective senior class presidents, thought of the idea over the summer.

"I ran into [Nagda] at a summer camp," Jeon said. "After sharing our experiences organizing various events for our respective schools, we realized how much in common the two schools had in terms of school culture and interests."

The Classic was centered around a coed senior-only soccer game between representatives from each school, but included a pie-eating contest, sports such as basketball and spikeball and live music from local groups. LHS students Lucas Burkh

older and Jacob Milendorf were DJs at the event and NSHS's a cappella group, The Newtones, performed.

The pie-eating contest drew a crowd around two contestants, each a representative from their school competing for one of three rounds.

Students ate pies including pumpkin pie and banana-cream pie. LHS won the first round, while NSHS won the second and third.

The competitions, soccer game and food drive for charity were opportunities for students to win points for their school.

"Instead of individual people winning, this is more of a head-to-head between the two schools," Emily Zhang, LHS senior class vice president, said.

Photo courtesy of Frank Ma

Eric Rubenstein, a Lexington High School senior, looks on during the pie-eating contest at the Fall Classic.

Tema Siegel, a senior and a member of The Newtones, said the Classic was a better attempt at class unity than ones organized by the administration.

"This event is really valuable to NSHS because this year it seemed like there's a lot of divide," she said.

All of NSHS was represented by one team during the competition.

The event was heavily advertised on Facebook, and students shared the event with friends online.

Seniors agreed that the event should continue in future years.

Lily Zhu, a student at NSHS said, "the event was fun, if only there were more people. The music was pretty great."

Gurley-Green Composition Award commemorates diverse music

Staff photo by Niha Putta

■ Jinhee Heo
William Zen
Staff Writer

Applications for the Adam Gurley-Green Composition Award are due on Jan. 1. The five winners will be announced on Feb. 1.

"We ultimately want to promote ongoing compositions," said Josh Gilbert, who helped to create the various categories and guidelines for the competition. "We want to encourage people to write new things."

"It's more to get the people who are kind of afraid to get their [compositions] out there, and don't have a means to," Andra Gurley-Green, promotional assistant and sister of the late Adam Gurley-Green said.

There are three categories for submissions: small ensemble for eight or fewer musicians, large ensemble for nine or more musicians and lead song for melody and chord progression. Five finalists will be chosen, but the adjudicators will give feedback to each applicant.

The current submissions include an electronic, hip hop rap piece and a singer-songwriter guitar and voice composition.

"We really wanted to open up it up as wide as possible for people who may not be picked up under the umbrella of the music department" Gilbert said.

Experts of various genres will be chosen to judge the compositions and mentor the finalists to revise their pieces. These experts range from members of the Lexington Symphony to Music Theory teacher and LHS Symphony Orchestra conductor Rachel Jayson.

Judging pieces is challenging due to diverse compositions. "It's hard to compare a hip hop piece with something for a string quartet ...but there are some things you can think about, like melody, harmony, counterpoint, complexity, orchestration—all the elements that you'd talk when you talk about music," Gilbert said.

Five finalists will each win a cash prize of $100 and the opportunity to work with local composers and musicians to revise their compositions. These works will be performed during the annual music awards night in May. The performers for the winning compositions will be chosen based on the instrumentation. For example, a classical piece would be performed by members of the Lexington Symphony and seniors in the LHS orchestras.

"If we have a string quartet, I think it would be great to get some seniors because it's the Awards Night, get some seniors to play…[the players are] mostly drawn from students and I imagine we could have some people fill in." said Gilbert.

Michael Tu, a junior at LHS, is currently composing a waltz for a full-size orchestra.

"I think that the best [prize] would be to perform it and to have professionals look at it and give me a critique," said Tu.

Cooking Club is a friendly, stress-relieving community

■ Ananya Walhekar
Columnist

As I step into Lexington High School's Cooking Club, I am greeted with friendliness and a savory scent. The club members are chopping vegetables and herbs — onions, tomatoes, carrots, garlic cloves, basil, potatoes, you name it. The diced and sliced pieces with their vibrant colors get tossed into the black abyss of a pan, where they sizzle and soften. Misa Sadin, the club captain, tells me they're making a traditional Japanese curry. Soon enough I see the dish come together as the liquid's color flushes a beautiful burnt umber.

We chatter for a while as the pan's contents bubble feistily. The steam rises up in white swirls, spreading its fresh smell all around the room. The club members discuss what they should make the following week. One person suggests toffee and pulls up a recipe; another suggests raspberry puff pastries. Misa explains to me that the club alternates between sweet and savory weeks to switch things up.

I notice Rohan Zeng, the co-captain of Cooking Club, poking at the vegetables with a chopstick at one-minute intervals. After a few minutes, a look of satisfaction reveals the heaven-sent news.

"Ooh, it's ready!" Misa announces. Everyone crowds round to see the final result, and Rohan starts serving the food. He forms each dish perfectly with identical mounds of sticky rice.

We are in the Earth Science classroom of Mr. Mixer, the club's advisor. I take a look at my surroundings and feel comforted, listening to the little pokes of sound in the air — small conversations rising above the light melody at uneven intervals.

Before long, Rohan offers me a plate. At first I refuse, but then my eyes widen as I smell the oh-so-familiar fragrance of the soothing yasai katsu curry I love. I am reminded of my all-time favorite dish during my rainy-day family outings to Wagamama — a British-Japanese chain with locations in Cambridge and Boston. I dollop a spoonful or two of the curry on to the steaming sticky rice.

The food cascades off the shiny metal curve and into my mouth. Immediately, I taste the warm, slightly tangy, buttery flavour I recognize and love. The curry sauce is rich and aromatic, and the rice is firm yet fluffy. I thank the club members for letting me join them for the day, and for the delicious food. I leave with a newfound liking for cooking, as well as the sense of achievement it brings.

I enjoyed my time at the club due to its calming, slow-paced environment. The people are friendly and collaborative, and the finished product rewarding. I've since decided to take up cooking, though by all means I'm not the cooking type. If you have some free thyme after school on Wednesdays, I suggest joining Cooking Club in Room 325.

Lexington hosts annual Challenge Day

Staff photo by Serena Mehrotra

Hugs, smiles and laughter are exchanged between faculty and students on Challenge Day 2016 at LHS.

■ Jake Kanef
Pranathi Srirangam
Staff Writers

On Nov. 28, Lexington High School hosted its second annual Challenge Day. The day long workshop allows for students and faculty members to connect with school members that may have never interacted before.

"Challenge Day is a full day experiential program designed to build connection and empathy fulfilling the vision that every child should be able to live in a world where he or she feels safe, loved, and celebrated," John Murray, John Murray, associate principal of LHS, said.

Over the course of Challenge Day, "We participate in a series of games and activities that really show one another that we are all LHS, we are all connected by our humanity, that we all have feelings, we all have things going on in our lives, nobody has a perfect life," Murray said.

Caroline Li, a freshman at LHS, attended the event. According to Li, the day was organized to defuse the initial tension and awkwardness. "We sat down, did a lot of icebreakers, strange icebreakers, like hug as many people as you can or high five or fist bump them or something," said Li, and "...despite the fact that now that I think about it, it was pretty awkward, it didn't feel that way while I was doing it. We fostered a sense community through a kind of mutual vulnerability, talking about our struggles and helping each other accept them," Li said.

After these lighter activities, "we transitioned to talking about being real, they described it as an iceberg, and how we weren't our image," said Li. Additionally, participants sat close together in order to make discussion easier and with less pressure.

Challenge Day has had an impact on its participants. "I got a lot of good feedback from parents as well." This is shown through "the number of emails, phone calls, and face to face conversations that [Murray] had with people whose kids were part of Challenge Day. High schoolers don't come home and tell their parents anything, but they [the parents] said their kids came home raving about this program and how it had an impact on them," Murray said.

When talking about what she learned, Li said, "I learned not to judge people, because I don't know them at all by looking at them, or even how they act. I also met new people, which I really liked."

This has already made an impact for Li. "One of the people in my small group just waved to me in the hallway, and they were someone I never would have met outside of Challenge Day."

During the parent-teacher conference...

"I remember when I had a student in my class who had moved from a non-English speaking country; she did not have a proficiency in English. She was very bright and was not finding enough challenge in that class. Both parents came with the interpreter and shared their concern. We made a plan for that student to work with an English language tutor and translating software. I started providing more challenging problems to her that she can work on and ask me questions. That really helped the student in gaining confidence and she started smiling in class. By end of the year she had made tremendous progress in her language skills and was recommended for higher-level course."

— Parul Kumar, chemistry teacher

"Sometimes right when the parent walks in, I can say, "I know who your child is!"

— Dea Haupt, math teacher

"Two parents told me that they told their kid not to take Latin, but that they now actually like the class."

— Maureen Haviland, Latin teacher

"Sometimes I will be talking about a student, saying how he is a great student, has a lot of potential, then the parent will say, 'You can just say he's lazy!' The parents can be harder on the kids."

— Andre Verner, math teacher

"Lots of people think that conferences end up with people yelling at one another, but they really lead to parents learning something that they didn't know about their child or the parent telling you something you might not have ever heard about the student, which makes everybody happy."

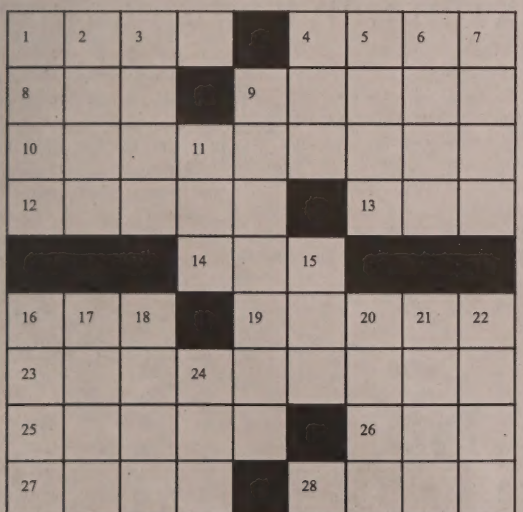
— Kelly Anderson, math teacher

"I remember many years ago (when conferences were in January the first day back from vacation) that there was no heat in the classrooms so we all pulled a table and two chairs out into the hallway with space heaters to have conferences. Really hoping that doesn't happen again."

— Katelyn Riley, chemistry teacher

Staff photos by Eunice Kim
Compiled by Jake Kanef and Brandon Wu

Lazy High Schooler Syndrome Crossword Puzzle



Across:

1. Earn a B-, say
4. Member of Suzanne Collins' target demographic
8. Earn an A+
9. "Their heads are green and their hands are blue, and they went to sea in a ____"
10. *Publication of the highest caliber?
12. Skeletor's nemesis
13. Facebook or Twitter, abbr.
14. ____ *to Joy*
16. U.S. weather assoc.
19. Required testing for many international students
23. *She tries to reduce stress
25. Shaq's surname
26. The 5th month, in France or Germany
27. Where the sun rises
28. Philosopher Marx

Down:

1. It may be eightfold
2. Dull pain
3. Appear
4. "____ but a scratch!"
5. Sounds of fright
6. Divisible by two
7. Tennis dividers
9. *Still more accurate than the LHS bell schedule
11. Chairman, of Cultural Revolution fame
15. American, spaghetti, or electric
16. Succulent ointment
17. Magical energy
18. Brings to court
20. Buddhist teacher
21. Slavic monarch
22. 2011 AWOLNATION hit
24. Betray, with "out"

Graphic by Eli Haber

For answers, visit lexmusket.com.

Coming soon to lexmusket.com - videoes of LHS teachers attempting to do DIY projects!

Boys varsity soccer wins state title

■ Rina Lu
Shayari Peiris
Editors

On Saturday, Nov. 19, the LHS boys varsity soccer won the Division 1 state championship. The Lexington team beat Westborough High School 2-1 at Manning Field in Lynn.

LHS was the 10th seed in the North entering the playoffs and played all six playoff games as the underdog. LHS soccer had its first finals appearance since 1985 and won their first state title under coach Keith Beaty.

"Playing in Saturday's game is an experience that I will never forget. The state final was the biggest game of all of our lives, and everyone stepped up to the challenge," junior Alex McLaughlin said.

Just two minutes into the game, senior Sagan Patarroyo-White "scored an amazing goal ... giving us an early advantage that would prove vital," McLaughlin said. The game continued as a deadlock for 75 minutes. With under three minutes left in the game, senior and co-captain Hagop Kouchakdjian scored, bringing the score to 2-0.

For the remaining time, "we defended with all we had ... and we were able to seal the win," McLaughlin said.

The sequence of scoring "our first goal, our second goal and when the final whistle blew" were moments of anticipation for Kouchakdjian. "It's a dream come true," Adrian Porras, a senior goalkeeper and co-captain, said.

The Saturday night victory was a result of heavy preparation from the team.

"Tactically we were prepared due to the level of communication between the coaches and the players ... physically, we practiced, ate well and made sure to cool down, stretch and roll out after every game," Alfred Joseph, a senior co-captain, said.

Players from the team credit the leadership of their coaches and teammates for their success.

"Both we and Coach Beaty demanded a lot from each other, so we grew from that," Kouchakdjian said.

While high expectations for hard work benefitted the team, players did not know what to expect in the state tournament. "We knew we had a strong team, but no one seriously considered a state championship," Porras said.

Players also set both personal and team goals: go undefeated throughout the regular season, win the league, and get past the first round of playoffs.

"We actually only accomplished one of those goals, but it won us the state title," McLaughlin said.

In addition to the players' hard work, community support also played a major role in the team's success. About 220 Lexington students came to cheer the team on at Manning Field along with nearly half as many adults.

"We could not have achieved what we did without the community around us, and on behalf of the team, we are grateful for the support and passion shown by the Lexington community throughout the entire season," McLaughlin said.

Although they faced initial challenges, the soccer team succeeded in bonding both on and off the field.

"Our team spirit can be captured by how we all unashamedly scream the lyrics to 'Don't Stop Believing' together on the bus after every win," Joseph said.

Looking forward, the state title means that "the future teams have a program to build off of and a legacy to live up to," Nick Barbesino, a senior defender, said. As for leadership, the team expects good things with Beaty at the helm.

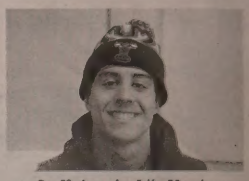
Though the game was challenging, "I was proud to be part of a Lexington team that showed its toughness from the first whistle to the final whistle ... everything we did this year was for each other. Don't stop believing," Porras said.

Photo courtesy of Gary Lerner

LHS boys varsity soccer team poses after becoming state champions.

Sal Frelick is named MVP

■ Nikki Kim
Shweta Kondapi
Staff Writers



Staff photo by Lily Harrington

Sal Frelick, only a junior in high school, is one of the few tri-varsity athletes at Lexington High School and the only one to be a captain in all three of those sports. Having grown up around athletes, Frelick's passion for sports grew through the encouragement of his family and peers. Growing up, he played baseball, football and hockey at a pretty competitive level. It soon became evident that he "was usually the best on [the] team," Frelick said.

Working hard, and motivated with clear goals in mind, Frelick was a natural. "I always strived to do the best I could but I realized that I had to be better than everyone else," Frelick said.

By the time he was a high schooler, Frelick's athletic endeavors took over his life. Not only did he integrate a workout into his daily schedule, he often sacrifice an hour of sleep in the morning just to squeeze in a workout before school started.

Frelick sought to become a better version of the athlete he was the day before every single day. "He was an amazing competitor and over the years I have watched him become an incredible leader," Tenzin Choedhen, a varsity football athlete, said.

Instead of slacking off during summer vacation, Frelick saw the time as his "most rigorous training period." He ran sprints and completed agility drills almost every morning; at night, after a brief resting period, he would go to the gym and lift for an hour. In addition, Frelick practiced hitting for baseball and throwing for football."My mind kept telling me that anytime I'm not getting better, someone else is," he said.

The hard work paid off. Making the varsity team in all three sports, Frelick's resume was irresistable for recruiters.

At the end of his freshman year, as one of the top baseball prospects in the state, Frelick was offered a spot at Boston College, his dream school since he was young. Without hesitation, Frelick accepted the offer.

Despite being recruited as a baseball player his sophomore year, Frelick, driven by his competitive nature, was not ready to give up his other varsity sports.

As a captain for all three of his sports, Frelick knew he "had to work twice as hard." In recent weeks, the football team finished their undefeated regular season and claimed the Middlesex title for the first time in many years. Frelick, largely contributing to the team's success, was named MVP of the Middlesex League and was an all-star at the quarterback position. "We couldn't have chosen a better leader to be our captain," Choedhen said.

Cross country combines true athleticism with teamsmanship

■ Rishi Dorbala
Columnist

Many sports such as football, soccer, basketball, baseball, and hockey often steal the glamour and headline exposure at Lexington High School, but one sport that is often overlooked is cross country.

Unlike track, cross-country features terrains that vary between 2.5 to 7.5 miles long, where runners pass through woodlands, hills and sometimes gravel roads. Runners must sustain a fast pace for a long duration which helps to distinguish truly impressive athletes.

This year, Lexington High School has done an outstanding job in both boys and girls cross-country.

The LHS girls team performed exceptionally well, capturing the coveted state title as well as its ninth straight Middlesex League meet.

The boys team finished the season with a perfect record of seven wins and no losses, its sixth straight undefeated season, and its fifth straight victory at the Middlesex League meet. Both teams had commanding victories against common foes Belmont, Winchester, Burlington and Reading.

Cross-country is unique not only because it requires athletes to maintain a strategic pace for an extended duration of time, but also because it is a team sport that emphasizes individualism.

Unlike other popular team sports, cross country highlights the accumulation of individual accomplishments rather than the cooperative and unified spirit of a team. There is no extra pass in overtime that can allow the team to earn a comeback victory. The only way to win is for each runner to run their hardest and perform superior to their own particular opposition.

Cross country tests one's mental and physical toughness to the maximum, not allowing time to rest or sit down during a meet.

Teams are scored cumulatively based on each individual runner's finishing place in his or her competition. So if a runner placed in first, the team would get one point, and if a runner placed in seventh, the team would get seven points.

In the end, the team with the lowest number of points wins. If a team wins the first three positions for runners then they automatically win a race. This means that spectators gain the liberty to root for numerous different winners: both specific individuals as well as their favorite team.

While football, basketball, and the other major sports may get all the exposure, cross country athletes show true athletic ability with the consistent fast paced long distance running for extended periods of time.

Photo courtesy of Alexis Tzannes

LHS girls cross country team wins the MIAA state championship.